

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:33 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. ROBERTS).

TSUNAMI WARNING, EDUCATION,
AND RESEARCH ACT OF 2015—
Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The distinguished Senator from Vermont is recognized.

VOTING RIGHTS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished Presiding Officer, the Senator from Kansas.

An editorial this morning in the New York Times is entitled: "Why Does Donald Trump Lie About Voting Fraud?" This is the editorial of which I speak. That is a question that many of us who have been fighting for the right to vote have been asking for decades. In a bipartisan fashion, this Congress reauthorized the Voting Rights Act 10 years ago. During the course of many, many, many Senate and House Judiciary Committee hearings, we fought against the false narrative that in-person voting fraud was at all common in our country. The evidence clearly and irrefutably shows that it is not, but, of course, the evidence does not stop those who are determined to make it harder for Americans to cast their votes.

Right after five Justices on the Supreme Court gutted the core protection of the bipartisan Voting Rights Act, several States led by Republican majorities enacted voting restrictions that made it harder for many Americans to vote.

It is most troubling that our President-elect has decided to make an unfounded charge of widespread voting fraud. I can imagine that he is disappointed in the fact that he got 2.5 million less votes than his opponent and did not win the support of a majority of Americans who voted last month. We should all hope that when our next President is presented with unfavorable realities, he will not resort to spreading information that has no basis in fact. That cannot and should never be the standard of American leadership.

In an article published in the Valley News of West Lebanon, NH, and reprinted this morning in VT Digger, researchers at Dartmouth explored President-Elect Trump's allegation of widespread voting fraud, and they found nothing to support his claim, noting "voter fraud concerns fomented and espoused by the Trump campaign are not grounded in any observable features of the 2016 Presidential election." Many other analyses have also made this crystal clear.

In a report to Congress, the Government Accountability Office concluded

that "no apparent cases of in-person voter impersonation [were] charged by DOJ's Criminal Division or by U.S. Attorney's offices anywhere in the United States from 2004 through July 3, 2014." That is the reality. The President-elect should not continue to peddle lies about voter fraud.

I say that because this year we have seen a dangerous uptick in what some call "fake news." These articles have no basis of reality or factual evidence, but they are broadly circulated because they affirm a particular ideology or because they are a proven way to make a quick buck by drawing the attention of unsuspecting online readers. Fake news stories get attention and clicks. We saw what happened when a man walks into a pizza place in the District of Columbia where children often congregate and fires a rifle because of one of these fake news stories he had read.

Some consider this despicable propaganda to be harmless, but it is certainly not without its victims. We know that the spread of lies through fake news can have real-world consequences, even for the public's faith in the Republic itself. There is no doubt that this is the way Russia sees it.

In conclusion, it should not be too much to ask our elected officials to operate on facts and reality. We will have many debates over policy in the years to come, as we should, but Americans deserve leaders who refuse to peddle in lies for political gain.

I call on leaders from both sides of the political aisle to no longer defend the indefensible.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the New York Times editorial be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the New York Times, Dec. 5, 2016]

WHY DOES DONALD TRUMP LIE ABOUT VOTER
FRAUD?

(By the Editorial Board)

The long-running Republican war against the right to vote has now gone national at the instigation of President-elect Donald Trump, who has promoted the lie that millions of illegal votes were cast in the presidential election.

There is not a scintilla of evidence for this claim, and Mr. Trump's own lawyers have admitted as much, stating in a court filing opposing a recount in Michigan that "all available evidence suggests that the 2016 general election was not tainted by fraud or mistake."

Yet one after the next, leading Republicans are spreading this slander of American democracy, smoothing the way to restrict voting rights across the country.

On Sunday, Vice President-elect Mike Pence told ABC's George Stephanopoulos that it was Mr. Trump's "right to express his opinion as president-elect." When pushed to admit that the illegal-voting claim was not true, Mr. Pence shifted the burden of proof away from Mr. Trump, even though Mr. Trump has accused millions of Americans of committing a crime. "Look," Mr. Pence said, "I don't know that that's a false statement, George, and neither do you."

Paul Ryan, speaker of the House, told CBS's "60 Minutes," "I have no knowledge of

such things," before defending Mr. Trump's claims as "giving voice to a lot of people who have felt that they were voiceless." (As recently as October, Mr. Ryan's spokeswoman noted that "our democracy relies on confidence in election results" and that Mr. Ryan was "fully confident the states will carry out this election with integrity.")

Reince Priebus, currently the chairman of the Republican National Committee and Mr. Trump's pick for chief of staff, told CBS's John Dickerson that "no one really knows" if millions of people voted illegally. "It's possible." It's equally true that no one really knows for sure that Reince Priebus wasn't snatched away and replaced with a doppelgänger hatched by aliens—it's possible, isn't it?

This is how voter suppression efforts start. First come the unverified tales of fraud; then come the urgent calls to tighten voter registration rules and increase "ballot security," which translate into laws that disenfranchise tens or hundreds of thousands of qualified voters.

That's already happened in Wisconsin and North Carolina, in Ohio and Texas, where Republican lawmakers pushed through bills requiring voter IDs or proof of citizenship; eliminating early-voting days and same-day registration; and imposing other measures. Virtually all these laws aimed at making voting harder for citizens who happen to be members of groups that tend to support Democrats.

While federal courts have struck down some of these laws, more keep popping up. In Michigan, lawmakers are pushing to fast-track a voter-ID requirement even though there was no evidence of voter impersonation there. In New Hampshire, the incoming governor, Chris Sununu, wants to do away with same-day registration, also despite the lack of any evidence that it resulted in fraud.

Reality is beside the point. Dallas Woodhouse, the executive director of the North Carolina Republican Party, recently told The New Republic, "Whether there's widespread voter fraud or not, the people believe there is." It doesn't seem to matter to G.O.P. leaders that election officials around the country of both parties have confirmed that there was no fraud on Election Day. What matters to them, as strategists have long known, is that Republicans do better when fewer people vote.

Under a Trump administration, anti-voter efforts could become national in scope—through congressional legislation, a hostile Justice Department or a Supreme Court nominee with little regard for voting rights.

Undermining the integrity of the electoral process and making it harder to vote is threatening to all Americans, regardless of party. The cynical Republicans now in power figure that all they have to do is fool the public long enough to win the next election. It's outrageous, but it's hard to see why they would stop when lying has gotten them this far.

Mr. LEAHY. I yield the floor and thank my colleague.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PORTMAN). The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I have some good news. Today we have before us a legislative package that reflects 2 years of work for the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee.

When we first embarked on this process, the goal was to find ways to spur innovation and reduce the time it takes for new therapies and treatments to get from the research bench to the bedside for patients. The bill is the 21st

Century Cures Act, which includes—I am going to repeat this several times—true bipartisan victories for patients in our health care system.

Throughout my time in Congress, I have been a consistent supporter of funding for the National Institutes of Health, or NIH, to fulfill our commitment to prioritizing biomedical research and innovation. NIH research returns priceless benefits, giving health care providers new tools and drugs to heal and give hope to individuals. The benefits of this research investment to Kansans back home have been direct and personal. Back in 2012, the University of Kansas Cancer Center received a National Cancer Institute designation, or an NCI designation. These centers are major players in research and development for cancer treatment and prevention.

The legislation we will be voting on today or tomorrow—or at the very least next week—does commit an additional \$1.8 billion for Vice President BIDEN's Cancer Moonshot. This will not only help the University of Kansas as they continue to push toward a comprehensive cancer center designation, but it will help all Americans who stand to benefit as we work to end the fight against cancer.

In addition to research funding, this bill includes some provisions I authored along with Senator KLOBUCHAR to improve and increase transparency in the review and approval of processes for medical devices. Specifically, the bill does this. It encourages the FDA, or the Food and Drug Administration, to accept international consensus standards to provide more predictability for innovators. Second, it makes improvements to the advisory committee selection process in an effort to provide more transparency. It provides a technical correction to establish a process by which the Food and Drug Administration may remove certain products from the class I device reserve list if they think a premarket review is no longer necessary to prove reasonable assurances of safety and effectiveness. Senators ISAKSON, CASEY, and ROBERTS' priorities seek to provide more certainty for FDA review of combination products and therapies that do not fit neatly into simply a drug or device.

The legislation also includes important reforms to our mental health system based largely on a bill the HELP Committee passed earlier this year. With this section of the bill, we seek to clarify and improve our mental health parity laws. We reauthorized the substance abuse and mental health block grants. We promote evidence-based practices to ensure we are utilizing our scarce resources on programs that work and not continuing to fund what doesn't work. We reauthorized the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act for suicide prevention and intervention and the National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative.

There is a lot more work to be done, obviously, to address the deficiencies

in our current system, but this bipartisan bill is certainly a good step in the right direction toward improving access to mental health services and eliminating the stigma of seeking treatment.

Finally, the 21st Century Cures Act includes numerous priorities that my colleagues on the Finance Committee and I have been working on for several years. One provision I was proud to support in committee extends the Rural Community Hospital Demonstration Program for another 5 years. As our rural hospitals continue to try and make ends meet, this program helps what we call "tweener" hospitals survive. Hospitals that do not qualify as critical access hospitals would not survive under the current Medicare payment system. It is a critical program that benefits Kansans in Junction City, Ulysses, and Fort Scott by keeping their hospital and access care open.

There is more rural relief. Senators THUNE, CRAPO, and I have championed a provision to protect rural access to durable medical equipment under the Competitive Bidding Program. We would have liked to have seen a more permanent solution. However, this bill delays applying competitively bid prices of rural areas and requires the Department of Health and Human Services to take into account stakeholder input as well as average travel distance, volume of items, services furnished, and the number of suppliers in these areas when determining adjustments in setting bid prices.

I have the privilege of being the co-chairman of the Senate Rural Health Caucus. I know how critically important these and other pieces of the package are for our beleaguered rural health care system. There is no question that we have many challenges ahead. While this package may not be a silver bullet to ensure cures for all that ails us, it sets priorities in research, cancer, cancer precision medicine, regenerative medicine, and heart-breaking diseases like Alzheimer's through the BRAIN Initiative. We all know someone affected by these dreaded diseases. It also makes significant changes in how these new therapies are evaluated, hopefully approved, and delivered to patients, providing more tools in the medicine cabinet that will improve many lives. Advances in medical research benefit us all, and this bill does just that.

I wish to make a comment with regard to previous discussions of this bill on the floor of the Senate. Unfortunately, a very small minority of my colleagues want to criticize and even villainize this legislation and those who worked so hard on it, which is terribly disappointing to me. With the passage of this bill, both Republicans and Democrats can take pride in putting together and working toward a bipartisan bill that lives up to its name—the 21st Century Cures Act. I regret the tone of the debate that took place with regard to this bill and the personal comments that were made.

I will remind my colleagues that there is a rule XIX that the distinguished Presiding Officer can invoke at any time and any Senator can ask that a Senator's words be taken down under rule XIX. I only say it so that we can look upon a bipartisan bill like this and say: Look at what we have done. Let's be proud of it and certainly not get into the mud with regard to any personal comments.

I urge my colleagues to advance research, advance the development treatments, and support this bill. It is a good bill. It is a bipartisan bill that we should all be proud of.

I thank the Presiding Officer and yield back.

21ST CENTURY CURES BILL

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, today I wish to support the 21st Century Cures Act, the bill currently before us that, if all goes well, will be approved by the Senate very shortly.

This important legislation represents the hard work of Members from both parties and from both sides of the Capitol. It has support across the economic and ideological spectrum and promises to do quite a bit of good for a number of people.

Put simply—or as simply as one can for a measure of this size—the 21st Century Cures Act represents a significant investment in improving our ability to discover and develop new treatments and medicines and ensure that patients have access to them.

To accomplish this goal, this legislation, among many other things, provides a much-needed expansion of funding for the National Institutes of Health, improvements to the approval process at the Food and Drug Administration, resources to respond to the growing opioid abuse crisis, and an updated government framework for addressing mental health needs.

Thanks to this bill, universities across Utah will be able to access the funding streams from the Precision Medicine Initiative, the BRAIN Initiative, and the Cancer Moonshot. Utah is known for its ability to leverage significant public-private partnerships to work towards cutting-edge health and innovation. I am proud to represent a State where complex technologies are being utilized to help patients find the best treatments and avoid interventions that would be costly, invasive, and ineffective.

Over the past several months, I have had several meaningful experiences working to improve health care for the people of Utah and for all Americans. For example, I had the pleasure of welcoming Vice President BIDEN to the Huntsman Cancer Institute in Utah as part of his Cancer Research Center tour.

The Vice President and I had an insightful discussion about a number of promising therapies being developed in Utah. This legislation will provide an infusion of funding for these types of